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ABSTRACT

This paper generally describes the activities and processes of a task force at William Rainey Harper College (Illinois) charged with reviewing the college's tenure policies relative to present needs and long-range projections. It provides a series of suggestions of use to other community colleges who might undertake a self-study of tenure policy. Among the suggestions are: (1) formation of a task force composed of representatives of the diverse college community (faculty and staff); (2) establishment of strong relations with the college Office of Planning and Research; (3) clarification and limitation of the responsibilities of the task force; (4) characteristics essential to the individual selected as chairperson of the task force; (5) survey and study areas for subgroups of the task force; (6) recommendations on internal organization and on use of time available for task force operations; (7) establishment of communications channels to insure faculty feedback; (8) issuance of an interim report; and (9) formalization of task force recommendations in a concluding report. Problems and benefits associated with each of the activities listed are discussed. A bibliography, a tenure self-study model, and a table listing possible data elements to be considered in developing staffing projections are appended. (JDS)

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ACADEMIC TENURE: A MODEL FOR SELF-STUDY

by

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INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

W. Todd Furniss, undoubtedly one of the most informed professionals on the subject of academic tenure, has provided the following introductory statement for the attached article. The authors feel this statement will be a good compliment to the manuscript and recommend its inclusion at the beginning of the article.

"Taking seriously the recommendations of the Commission on Academic Tenure, faculty and administrative leaders at William Rainey Harper College initiated a review of the college's tenure policies in relation to present needs and long-range projections and successfully recommended policy modifications to the Board of Trustees. The process they used is the subject of this paper, in which the authors offer community colleges a helpful compendium of suggestions for preparing recommendations that cope with the real world and have wide acceptance on campus. Tenure policies and related matters of appointment, evaluation, and advancement are too crucial to the quality and adaptability of a college's program to be left to chance or the pressures of the moment."

W. Todd Furniss

ACADEMIC TENURE: A MODEL FOR SELF-STUDY

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Academic tenure in American colleges and universities is by no means a fresh topic, but many institutions faced with the problems of staff retrenchment and program reductions find themselves forced to take a hard look at all issues concerned. In the past year, no system of academic employment has been so quickly debated, and often challenged, than that provision for employment guaranty that has one foot in the abstractions of academic freedom, and the other on the month-end, practical world of continued employment expectation.

During 1973-74, William Rainey Harper College, one of the most innovative and fastest growing community colleges in the country, set about to "study itself" on the academic tenure issue, and to explore all possible internal conditions in the development of recommendations for the Harper College Board of Trustees.[1]

[1]Harper College's self-study drew heavily on the Keast and Macy Report, i.e. Faculty Tenure, A Report and Recommendations by the Commission on Academic Tenure in Higher Education, William R. Keast, John W. Macy, San Francisco, 1973.

In accordance with usual problem study procedures, a Task Force Committee of faculty and administrative representatives was appointed in the fall of 1973. Harper's experience in the examination of its current tenure program and the resulting changes and directions for the future serves as an effective community college model for institutional self-examination of the academic or instructional sector. (Figure 1)

Unlike many American collegiate institutions, Harper has escaped the pinch of forced instructional staff reductions; its self-study reinforced internal perceptions that current national discussions on steady-state staffing would not be totally applicable. Instead, Harper found itself viewing a steady-state ascendancy condition, or a pattern of continued enrollment growth in an eight to ten year projection. Still, the urgency of the problem was felt by Harper officials, and the charge to the Task Force was to develop a steady-state model that would be salient to the college's needs and projections.

UNDERSTANDING THE STEADY-STATE CONCEPT

Steady-state terminology and its application to higher education borrows heavily from business and economic sectors.[2] In brief, it deals with the recognition of long term policies, conditions, and practices that pertain to faculty appointments or hiring, tenure or employment

[2]For a thorough discussion of several approaches to staff planning, see W. Todd Furniss, Steady-State Staffing in Tenure-Granting Institutions, American Council on Educations, Washington, 1973.

guarantees, and promotion or rank and retirement provisions.[3] Such institutional efforts at self-examination in terms of long range projections requires:

1) A sensible analysis of prior and prevalent practices.

2) A subsequent projection of the results of continuing current policies.

3) A group of projections involving alternatives.

Harper's Task Force felt a sense of collegial responsibility in studying the problem and realized that any discoverable solutions would be in the form of recommendations to the Board of Trustees. Nevertheless, the prevailing winds of faculty discontent, not peculiar to any single American college, necessitated several significant moves and assumptions. The authors offer them here in partial prescription for fellow college administrators.

1) The Harper Task Force had to establish a strong relationship with the college's Office of Planning and Research. This move succeeded in identifying a useful source of evidentiary information, just as it broke ground for future use of a traditionally administrative support office by a faculty committee.

2) Provision was made for external consultants that would promote discussion and productivity on the Task Force, and add currency to the merits of involving faculty in decision making processes. Since relatively few faculty bodies know little of the concept of tenure and its collective implications for college planning and operations and possess a usually personal perspective, it is often necessary to provide external

[3]Those eligible for tenure at Harper College are all faculty who perform full-time teaching or its equivalent including Counselors, Coordinators, and Learning Resources personnel.

professional advice and information to the Task Force. Such a move assists in providing a maximum of new and current information to faculty groups which invariably are committed to defending a "safe" and established status quo on tenure, and who are often incipiently opposed to or closed to discussion of new or alternate options on tenure and staffing.

3) Extreme care should be given to the presentation of the steady-state staffing concept in a humanistic perspective. Faculty fears often run rampant in the face of a plan that carries a coldly corporate or unfeeling air--especially when faculty are asked to look at institutional planning and accountability in a way that is not normally afforded to the faculty.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TASK FORCE CHARGE

The charge given to any projected tenure review committee or task force should not only clarify and limit the tasks of the collective membership, but provide for the investigative freedom necessary to develop needed data from various sources. At Harper College, the charge, and subsequent activity of the Committee, assumed an added educational direction--both for the Task Force and the Board of Trustees which received the final report.

In view of Harper's productive experiences, we would propose that the charge or set of objectives should provide for the following:

1) A review of the policy of tenure--both at the home institution and in other community colleges.

2) The recommendation of policies or guidelines for a steady-state staffing plan for individual instructional and service units, and total institutional coverage for a ten year period.

Moreover, the Harper experience underscores the need for an appropriate work-study time frame for the chairman, the total committee membership, and the recipient Board of Trustees. In addition, Harper's Task Force charge provided for the possibility of additional or secondary goals that did result from the variable study and discussion initiatives. Difficulties often arise if Task Force membership is unaware of broader institutional needs or projections. Such problems may be alleviated if adequate attention is given to informational or fact building and fact acquiring sessions.

WHAT KIND OF CHAIRMAN

Those colleges desiring to examine their own tenure status should take a hard look at the selection of the chairman for the proposed Task Force. The qualities needed include interest, experience, ability to lead discussion, deliberative capability, ability to prepare reports, ability to develop strengths or leadership capability among group members, and reliability in carrying out managerial assignments. At Harper College, a division chairman was chosen to direct the Task Force on tenure, but whether administrator or faculty member, the particular Task Force chairman must be provided a certain amount of time away from regular duties in order to develop a system of effective time management. Meetings must be called,

sessions must be reported, and minutes and documents must be produced.

MAKING GOOD USE OF SUB GROUPS

Once Harper's Task Force had been named and a chairman selected, the process of internal organization took place. An important first step was for the chairman to appoint an executive council due to the fact that broad faculty representation required a large committee (18 - 20 members).

The chairman, in consultation with the executive council, then determined that several areas of study were necessary in order for the Committee to be able to discuss the full range of alternatives.

Survey and study areas arranged included:

1) Long-range projections of staff.

2) A regional survey of other community colleges.

3) A survey of the Harper College faculty with regard to the issues.

4) A development of a bibliography of reading materials available to the Committee.

5) A consideration for outside resource personnel to assist the Committee in its deliberations.

These sub-groups then proceeded to pull together the needed information and to package it appropriately for the entire Committee to review. The full Committee, of course, had the right to reject reports by these sub-groups and to challenge them to go further or re-study certain issues. Once a report was completed and

accepted, the discussion stage of the review process became easier.

WHAT CAN THE INSTITUTION PROVIDE

The Harper experience indicated that various needs must be clarified and planned for in the work of the Task Force. A college, for instance, must provide a suitable physical environment for the work of the Committee and its sub-units. Care in scheduling and planning for these activities will do much to keep the participants interested and involved in the discussion process.

The Task Force should have access to administrative personnel who are able to develop and project the data elements required for discussion. An illustration, the ability to project enrollments and faculty size over a five to ten year period is most important if candid discussions are to occur regarding future staff configurations. At Harper, the Office of Institutional Planning was able to provide various statistical projections which saved many hours of committee work and provided a basis for several ultimate recommendations (Figure II.). Such Task Forces should schedule at least one extended discussion period of two or three days. At Harper, the Committee once met for a two day period and coverage of many of the Committee members' classes were arranged and supported by the academic administration. After all of the sub-

groups have completed the work of compiling and organizing the data, extended discussions are necessary to achieve closure on the crucial issues.

HOW IMPORTANT IS TIME

A Task Force on tenure review fast becomes a great respecter of time. At Harper College, the group constantly battled self-imposed deadlines in its desire to do an effective job. Interested colleges should provide goals for time frames that could be utilized for the overall Task Force activities. Keep in mind that once Task Forces are set up, there needs to be adequate time to gather, sift, discuss, and compile a wide range of information. Every effort should be made to provide time and resources for development of questionnaires, printing, mailing, and the processing of returns. Since tenure review involves a trip down an unfamiliar road (and Harper College was not unlike other institutions in this respect) the need to research various areas of the field is also important and the Task Force should have time to consider the bibliography and available documents.

In this sphere, our experience served to emphasize the value of Task Force activity as a means to faculty development or enrichment. If a critical or basically problematical phase of the operation developed, it was most noticeable in the time allotted for the process of negotiation and discussion. It is of obvious impor-

tance that adequate time be allowed for discussion and review, and for the reaching of consensus or general agreement on the various positions voiced by the Committee members.

WHAT DOES THE FACULTY THINK? THE IMPORTANCE OF A FEEDBACK SYSTEM

It is important that the general faculty be heard either singly or from their governance body. At Harper College, appointments were made to the overall Task Force on the basis of the various academic divisions and support agencies within the college. Additionally, tenured and non-tenured people were selected to represent those divergent segments of the faculty. Another consideration included the appointment of faculty who represented various tracks of the academic program, and this was in keeping with the demands of contemporary community colleges which require faculty representation from transfer and career areas as well as support services.

These various appointees should have the responsibility to bring to the general Task Force the feelings of their particular constituents on the issues under discussion. Throughout, and especially during the summary stages of the Committee's deliberations, it is important that the various problems raised for discussion and consensus be known to the general faculty, and that they are provided adequate opportunity for feedback to their representatives. This was achieved through

divisional and staff meetings at which time Task Force members solicited the reactions of their constituency. Emphasis on the broadest possible input from faculty cannot be understated. Such an effort may well allay faculty fears on so timely and crucial an issue.

THE VALUE OF AN INTERIM REPORT

Harper's experience stressed the development of a first-stage or interim report to the Board of Trustees. A Task Force charge that includes a provision for a preliminary report assists in dividing the basic initiatory and data collecting efforts from the deliberative and reporting responsibilities. The interim report gave visibility to initial tasks completed--often an aid in a community college committee environment where little previous "committee governance" experience is evident, and where a Task Force charge often has to contend with the inertia of other community college committees that are contentious, adversarial, or negotiatiory in character.

CONCLUDING THE STUDY

Formalizing the recommendations is the major task left after the interim report has been filed. This task involved extensive discussion and negotiation to reach recommendations that are acceptable to the majority of the Committee. At this point, the Executive Council should play a significant role in formulating draft recommendations to be debated by the entire Task Force. It is extremely difficult to develop the recom-

mendations with the large Task Force, and again, the element of time places a significant constraint on the Committee.

The final Committee report was reviewed with the faculty in a special meeting before submission to the chief academic officer. The purpose of the faculty review was to maintain the channels of communication regarding principal elements of the study. Throughout the review process, the Committee remained available to respond to questions from the faculty and administration.

The chief academic officer then forwarded his recommendations along with the report to the president who presented the information with his recommendations to the Board of Trustees. The Board was able to review existing policy and modify appropriate areas to remain consistent with staff and program projections.

The Harper College Task Force made good use of various printed resources. Mr. Marshall Fisher, Librarian at Harper College and a member of the Task Force, developed a working bibliography, part of which is included here.

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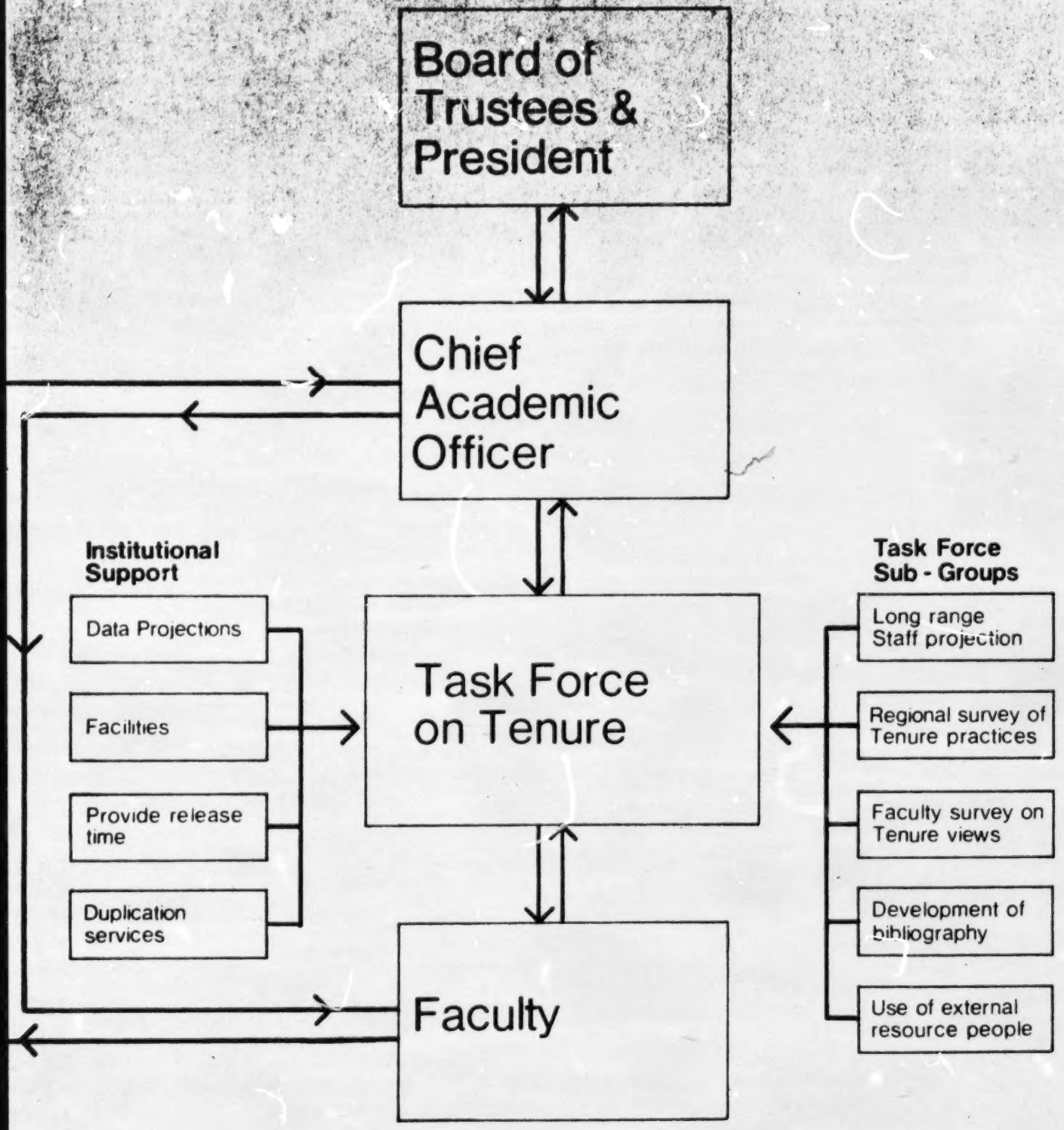
FIGURE I.

A Tenure Self - Study Model



Possible data elements
to be projected

- Total Credit Enrollment
  - Day Credit FTE
  - Evening Credit FTE
- F-T Faculty
- P-T Faculty (Full-Time Equated)
- Full-Time Equated Faculty
- F-T Faculty Resignations
  - Deaths or non-returning
  - Tenured
  - Non-Returned
- F-T Faculty Retirements-age 65 (assume all tenured)
- F-T Faculty Retirements at age 60
- New F-T Faculty Required

Assume __% per year

1974 _ _ _ 1979 _ _ _ 1984

Determine Time Frame For
Individual Institutions

FIGURE II.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

OCT 22 1976

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGES